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ABSTRACT

This book, one of a series, focuses on how parents can communicate better with children and help them improve their speaking and listening skills. The message of the series urges parents and children to spend time together, talk about stories, and learn together. The first part of each book presents stories appropriate for varying grade levels, both younger children and those in grades three and four, and each book presents stories on a particular theme. The Read-along Stories in this book are: "Gwendolyn with Her Glasses On" (Doris Orget); "The Box in the Barn" (Barbara Eckfeld Conner); and "The Grindelstark" (Pierre J. Moesser). On an accompanying audiotape, the stories are performed as radio dramas, allowing children to read along. The second half of each book provides ideas and guidelines for parents, as well as activities and books for additional reading. This book suggests six ways to improve conversation between parents and children: (1) be interested; (2) avoid dead-end questions; (3) extend conversation; (4) share your thoughts; (5) define and reflect feelings; and (6) observe cues. Contains 32 references. (EF)

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Parents and Children Together SERIES

Speaking and Listening

ED 452 533

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Read-along Stories:

Gwendolyn with Her Glasses On

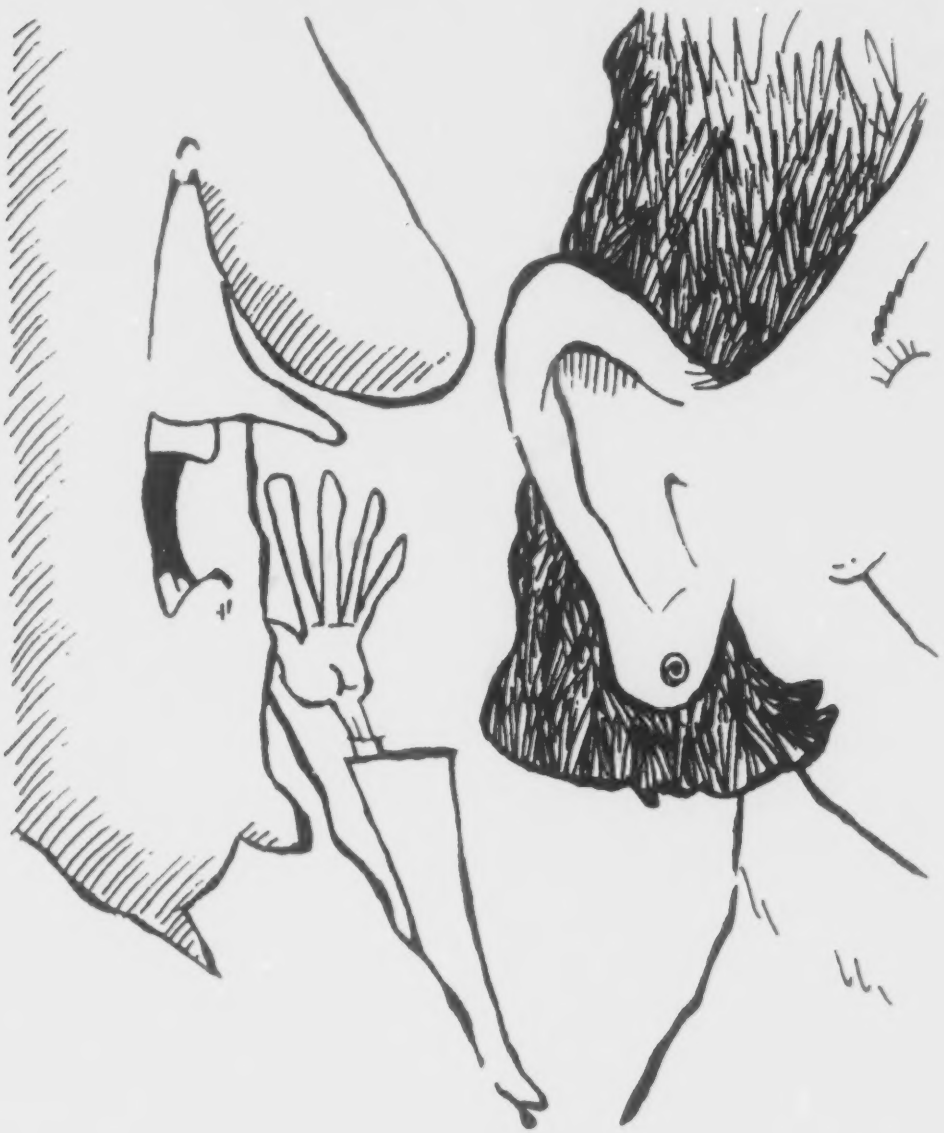
The Box in the Barn

The Grindelstark

CS 217 393

Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Speaking and Listening." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.



Parents and Children Together SERIES

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Introduction

Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together***.

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audio tape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this Series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***

BARK YIP YIP
RUFF YAP BARK!
THROW THE BALL, RICHIE, AND I'LL FETCH IT!

Getting Started

We all use a variety of messages to communicate our thoughts and feelings to each other. In this book we focus on how you can communicate better with your children and help them improve their speaking and listening skills.

On side B of the tape we have read-along stories and poems. We encourage you to listen to these stories and poems and to read them with your children, so that they can participate in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can also listen to the stories and poems alone, if you wish.

You may want to take some time to look ahead at these stories and poems before you read along with your child. It is also important to talk about them ahead of time.

> Before reading the story, talk about the title or things that might happen in the story. Then, after the story is finished, talk about it again. By the way, if in the middle of the story something funny or interesting happens, it's OK to stop the tape and discuss the event, or ask your child questions such as "How do you think the puppy got back into the box?" or "Have you ever tasted chamomile tea? Do you remember a character from another story who drank that tea?" (Peter Rabbit) These questions make your conversations about the story more meaningful and more valuable.

When you and your child are ready, turn the tape to side B and listen to the stories as you read along together, or you may wish to read the stories aloud while your child follows along in the booklet.

Part I
Read-along Stories and Poems

YAWN

Gwendolyn with Her Glasses On

by Doris Orgel

Things to Do *before* Reading the Poem

Talk about a time when you tried on someone else's glasses. How did things look different?

Gwendolyn G. Winkerhoff
Took her gold-rimmed glasses off
When it was time to go to bed.
She pulled her tee-shirt over her head.

She put her glasses on again,
Took her shoes and socks off, then,
Her blue jeans and her underpants,
And did the Gwendolyn-Naked Dance:

"Hop, skip, feel the air ripple on my skin."
"Land's sakes!" Mrs. Potter, the sitter, barged in,
"You'd better get pajamas on!
And button the buttons, every one!"

As though that weren't bad enough,
She made her take her glasses off,
And stuck her into bed. "Go 'way!"
Wished Gwendolyn, but did not say,
"Get out of here, and let me be!"
The sitter left her, finally.

Then Gwendolyn G. Winkerhoff
Quick, took her pajamas off,
Thinking, "Why should people wear
Clothes to bed, when sleeping bare
Feels much better, and is fun?
But I need my glasses on."

And she put them on just right,
So she could see her dreams all night.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Poem

Gwendolyn has her own special way of doing things. She likes to get ready for bed in a different way than most people do. Make a list of things you like to do in your own special way and talk about why you like to do them.

JAAA-
-SON!

The Box in the Barn

by Barbara Eckfeld Conner

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

Boxes often contain surprises. Close your eyes and visualize a box. Then imagine yourself walking up to the box and opening it. What's inside? Does the box you imagined contain a pleasant or unpleasant surprise?

Jason heard his mom calling him. Instead of answering her, he slipped deeper into the tall weeds behind his house. He closed his eyes, thinking of what he had done.

He had gotten up that morning in a good mood. Raspberry pancakes were on the table when he walked into the kitchen rubbing his eyes and yawning.

"After breakfast, Jason, I want you to go into town with me," Mom said quietly. "It's your sister's birthday, and we need to shop for her gifts."

Jason was eager to go, even if the gifts weren't for him. Buying presents was always fun.

As they drove to town, Jason couldn't help but ask the question that had been on his mind since yesterday when Aunt Nancy came. "What's in the big box that Dad took to the barn, Mom? Is it something Aunt Nancy brought for Megan's birthday?"

"It's a surprise, Jason, and I don't want you going near that barn today. Do you hear me?"

Jason sat staring at the road ahead. He knew that nothing would change his mother's mind. Only now he was more curious than ever!

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Back home, Megan ran out to meet Jason, her eyes wide and excited. "Jason, Jason, I'm six years old!" she cried, jumping up and down.

"I know, I know." Jason gave her a big hug.

Soon the house was buzzing with excitement. Megan sat on the stool watching while Mom and Aunt Nancy prepared the birthday dinner. Dad wouldn't be back for at least two hours. Jason wandered outside trying to think of something to do, but his thoughts kept returning to the box in the barn.

He started walking toward the barn, not at all sure what he'd do when he got there. He was hoping for just a glimpse of the box. Instead he heard a strange noise coming from inside the barn. He wished he could just turn back to the house, but his legs carried him into the barn. Jason saw the box. It was sitting between two bales of hay. He could hear loud wailing cries. Leaning over, Jason carefully lifted the lid. There was the most cuddly puppy he had ever seen!

"You must be pretty scared, huh, fellow?" Jason said quietly as he held the wiggly dog. "Megan's going to love you!" He secretly wished the puppy was for him. After all, Mom and Dad knew that he had been wanting his own puppy. Probably Aunt Nancy didn't know that, and anyway Megan would be happy.

Soon Jason was playing happily with the puppy, and he forgot that he wasn't supposed to be in the barn. Taffy, their big brown horse, stuck his head in the window as if to say, "What's going on?" Jason jumped, remembering that he wasn't supposed to be there. The puppy ran off as fast as it could out of the barn into the field.

Jason stumbled out of the barn looking wildly for any trace of the puppy. "Come on, puppy! Oh, please come here!" he called, his eyes welling up with tears.

Now here he was, two hours later, hiding in the weeds. He'd looked everywhere, but the puppy was gone. He had ruined his sister's birthday.

"Jason! It's time for dinner!" Mom called even louder now. Just when he was determined to stay forever in the tall weeds, he heard his sister' voice.

"Jason! It's time for my party, Jason!" Megan yelled excitedly.

Jason rubbed his swollen eyes, trying to look normal. He couldn't ruin everything for her. "I'm here, Megan," he called.

"Are you OK?" she asked with genuine concern.

"Sure. Let's hurry." Jason grabbed her hand as they ran back.

As soon as they reached the house, the party began. Jason tried to pretend that everything was fine. When it was time to open Megan's birthday gifts, he sat in the big easy chair, hoping no one would notice him. Finally the last present was opened.

"I'll be right back," Dad said.

Jason knew Dad was going to the barn. Megan would probably never forgive him for losing her birthday puppy. Everyone, even Aunt Nancy, would be angry when they found out the puppy was gone.

"Jason! Come here!" It was Dad calling from the front yard.

Jason slowly got out of the chair. It was hard to move, but Megan grabbed his hand and said, "Come on, Jason! Let's see what Dad wants."

Jason followed Megan out the door. Mom and Aunt Nancy followed close behind.

There was Dad standing with the box next to him in the grass. "Jason, I want you to open this box and see what's inside."

Jason looked up and saw that Dad was smiling. He turned and saw that Mom, Aunt Nancy, and Megan were smiling, too. What would he say to them when there was nothing in the box? But as Jason looked down, expecting to see nothing at all, he jumped back in surprise. The puppy looked up at him with sleepy eyes.

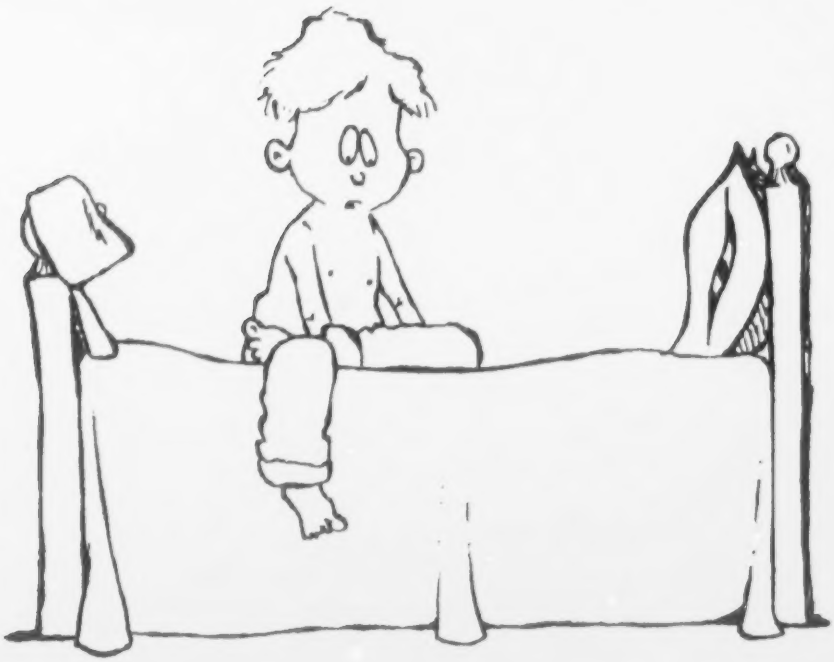
"Wow!" said Jason, bewildered.

"The puppy's for you, Son," his father said.

"I thought you'd like a gift, too, even if it isn't your birthday," said Aunt Nancy, laughing.

Megan started clapping. "Isn't he wonderful, Jason?" The puppy jumped up, ready to play. Jason and Megan spent the rest of the day with the puppy.

Later, when he was getting ready for bed, Jason turned to his father and said, "You know, Dad, I feel bad about something I did today."



Dad waited patiently as Jason explained what had happened. "And I still can't figure out how my puppy got back into his box!" he added.

"Well, Son, on my way home I saw your puppy along the side of the road. I figured he had gotten out of his box somehow... You must have felt terrible during the party," Dad continued. "I get the feeling you've learned a lot today." He pulled back the covers on Jason's bed.

Jason looked down at his new puppy, who was sleeping soundly in a basket by the bed. "Dad, I think I'll call him Buddy."

Dad smiled and tucked the covers snugly around Jason.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Talk about how this story made you feel—happy, sad, scared, relieved. Then use your crayons or markers to draw a picture that expresses the feeling you just talked about. Maybe part of the story made you feel sad. What colors and shapes could you draw that look sad? Maybe the story's ending made you feel happy. What colors and shapes look happy to you?

The Grindelstark

by Pierre J. Moeser

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

Can you tell what this story might be about just from looking at the title? Together, discuss what you think will happen in this story.

A long time ago in Silesia, a young girl and her parents lived in a small cottage at the edge of a dark forest. Few people chose to live outside the village of Sagau and none lived as close to the forest as Johann and Agnes Mayer and their 12-year-old daughter, Anne. The villagers said something horrible lurked in the dark woods and there was no reason to test it. But for Anne, the forest stood as a mystery which begged to be solved.

One day while Anne's mother Agnes was visiting her sister in Breslau, Anne and her father decided to walk to the village for fresh supplies of flour, cheese, and chamomile tea. They also wanted to buy some straw and strong twine so they could make a new broom. Early in the morning, father and daughter shook out their featherbeds and dressed for their walk. As they strolled hand-in-hand down the well-worn path, Anne sang happily and gazed at the beauty around them. Suddenly she slowed her steps and flashed a mischievous smile at her father. With a sigh which meant that he had understood his daughter's silent request, Anne's father began the often retold story of the forest.

"It's been 20 years since anyone has dared go into the forest," Johann said. "Before then, I loved to listen to the stories the hunters told when they returned to the village. The hunt sounded exciting, but I wasn't allowed to go into the forest. My father had died and my mother was afraid a wolf might attack me. 'Later Johann,' my mother used to say, 'when you are much older.'"

Anne skipped on ahead of her father, then stopped and turned back to make sure he would continue the story, "Yes, Papa?"

Johann's face grew stern. "One day when my mother and I were in the village, I heard the old priest speak to a group of townsfolk. 'Klaus Opfer hasn't come back from the hunt and it has been three days now,' he said.

'Probably got lost,' one man suggested.

Another man said, 'Klaus is so stubborn he's probably tracking down some deer and won't give up the chase.'

'We should form a search party,' said the priest, 'whatever the reason.'"

Anne waited for her father to catch up to her, and then she took his hand. Johann cleared his throat, looked away, and continued as they walked. "That afternoon, my mother and I walked back with the search party as far as our cottage. Mama went inside but I followed the others to the edge of the woods. Big Rudolf led the way with his brother Fritz. Behind them followed the village blacksmith, the brewer, the tanner, and two hunters.

At the entrance to the forest, Big Rudolf turned around and caught me trying to hide behind the blacksmith. 'Far enough for you, Johann,' Rudolf said.

'Please let me come along,' I begged, 'I can take care of myself.'

'And your mother will take care to give us a good kick in the pants,' said Fritz. He laughed and the other six laughed too. My face turned red and I turned back. I heard them singing as they went into the woods.

As I approached our cottage, I heard Rudolf yell, 'Look out, Fritz!' I ran to the edge of the forest. A deep roar rose above the screams of the men. I stood on the path, frozen with fear. The screams grew louder and then faded.

Just then Sepp, the farmer who lived nearby, ran up behind me with a pitchfork in his hand.

'What was that?' he asked. I could only point toward the forest."

Johann paused to wipe his eyes. Anne arched her eyebrows and said, "Did the farmer ever find anything?"

"Sepp went into the forest and soon came out without his pitchfork. He held something in his hand, close to his chest. I couldn't keep up as he ran back to the village. Later, I heard he had fainted as he arrived at the market square. In Sepp's hand was big Rudolf's left boot with Rudolf's bloody foot still in it."

Anne looked up into her father's eyes and said, "But you didn't see it yourself, did you, Papa?" Johann just shook his head.

When Anne and her father reached the village, they noticed a crowd had gathered at the central square. Because her curiosity always got the best of her, Anne insisted they investigate. As she led her father through the tangle of fearful citizens, he also became curious and began to ask people what all the excitement was about. An old woman wearing a flowered head scarf said, "This man," and she pointed to a pale-faced young man who sat trembling in the center of the crowd, his eyes large as white saucers, "this visitor from Rabka says he saw phantoms at the edge of the forest."

"They were ghosts, I tell you," he babbled. "Two of them looked like women. Floating in a big pine near an abandoned path. Chanting something about don't go into the forest, danger there. Scared me to death. I ran so fast I almost ran out of my shoes."

OOOO

Quickly Anne dropped her father's hand and hurried back on the path toward the cottage. When she reached the towering pine tree, she turned onto the abandoned path. Because she was unsure of what she would find, Anne walked cautiously and concentrated on the old faded markers on the trees. Blackberry bushes grew everywhere and she halted for a feast of ripe berries. The forest path was dim, but the atmosphere seemed quiet and peaceful.

Exhausted by her journey, Anne had just sat down on a fallen log when the leaves on a nearby bush began to shake. She jumped back, and a bristly brown figure darted out. Only a hedgehog! As she

started to breathe again, she laughed at herself for being frightened. It must not be time to rest, she thought, and continued deeper into the words, still excited but less confident.

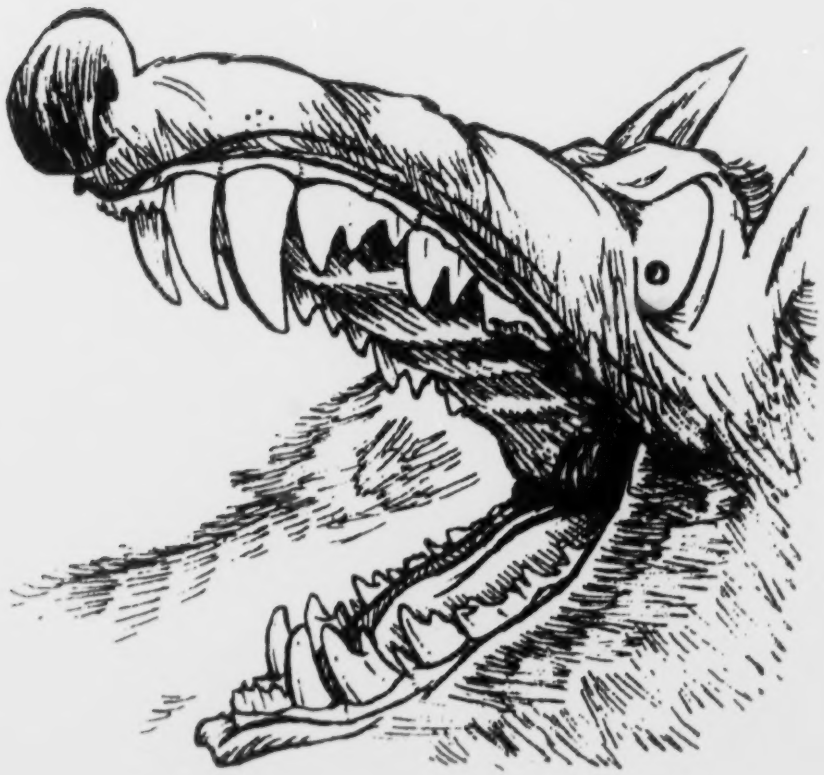
What was the real reason no one journeyed into the woods? Was there a wondrous secret hidden there, or did the ones who never returned simply get lost? Her thoughts were interrupted as she came upon a clearing with a shining lake. Tall pines on the distant shore reflected on its silver surface.

A few steps later, she heard it—a low growl and then a wheeze. She froze in her tracks, her heart pounding. In the next moment, she saw the beast who had terrified the villagers for the last 20 years. He was as large as a bear and had the face of a wolf. His massive body was covered with ragged black fur. Slowly the beast's bulging bloodshot eyes met her own frightened stare. Drawing back his lips to reveal long yellow fangs, the creature spoke.

"Pity you are so small, little one."

"How do you know I'm alone?" Anne shot back. Her rebellious tone surprised even herself.

The monster threw back his head and opened his mighty jaws showing the depth of his ruby throat.



"I am Grindelstark, and I shall devour you as I have the others. Many seasons have passed since I last feasted on the bones of a two-legged creature. My appetite is big. If you are not alone, I will be pleased."

Anne's mind worked furiously. The path was long and Grindelstark was surely swift.

"Some monster you are. You stay in the woods when there is a whole village..." Anne sucked in her breath trying to recapture her last words.

"Alas, my eyes only serve me well in dim light. I am almost blind in strong sunshine or night's blackness, so I cannot leave the forest."

Anne looked up and saw storm clouds had filled the sky. She reached into the pocket of her dress and nervously fingered a forgotten piece of chalk. Suddenly, she spied a deer lying on a small rocky island in the lake.

"Look, Grindelstark, you missed an easy meal right there on that island. Why don't you go for it now? It's only a couple of swim strokes away."

"Unfortunately, I cannot swim, my little morsel."

As he spoke, Grindelstark moved between Anne and the safety of the water. Anne brought her perspiring hands together.

"What have you there, tasty one?" demanded the beast as he caught a glimpse of the chalk in her right hand.

Anne looked down. "Oh, nothing," she said. "Nothing but the bone of a chalkenwritingtick. It's a one-legged animal with the most delicious bones in *the world.*"

Grindelstark drooled. "Ah, then I shall save this delicacy for after I have made a meal of you."

With that, the monster reared up, ready to spring, his bloodshot eyes focused on Anne's right hand. Anne whipped back her arm and flung the chalk missile high over Grindelstark's head.

With lightning speed, the monster spun around and leapt high into the air. The chalk barely rippled the surface as it hit the water. Grindelstark bellowed and writhed in midair as he realized he was to follow the little bone to a watery grave. A spray of water covered Anne as the beast splashed into the lake. Grindelstark thrashed wildly and churned the water's surface into foam. Soon only the monster's head remained above the surface. He rolled a bloodshot eye toward Anne and said, "I had you, all mine," then opened his cavernous mouth wide against the sky and sank to his death.

"The forest is safe now," Anne told herself as she watched the last bubbles break on the lake's surface. She held her arms across her chest and hugged herself. Somehow she didn't feel ready to celebrate. Papa must be worried to death, she thought.

Anne turned and raced across the clearing back into the forest. Clouds covered the sun, and she barely saw the markers on the trees. Halfway through the forest, she heard heavy footsteps on the path, and they seemed to be coming closer. She crouched down as a tall figure broke through the trees.

"Papa!"

"Anne, you're safe! Hurry, let's get out of the forest while we still can."

Anne jumped up into her father's arms and said, "We don't need to hurry any more." Johann pulled his head back and looked into her eyes.

"It's true, Papa," she said in a confident voice. "The monster is dead."

"But how?" said Johann.

"At first, I didn't believe the old story," Anne said, "But then I saw it, down by the lake, a huge monster named Grindelstark." As Anne told her story, the pines began to hum in a strong wind. Anne stopped, and father and daughter stood silently and listened to the sound in the trees. Anne, Johann, and the forest let out a long sigh of relief.

Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Anne's curiosity made her want to investigate the mystery of the monster who lived in the forest. Her curiosity could have gotten her into trouble, but she was so smart and brave that she managed to outwit the Grindelstark. Ask your Mom or Dad to tell you about a time when curiosity made them want to investigate a mystery and try to solve it.

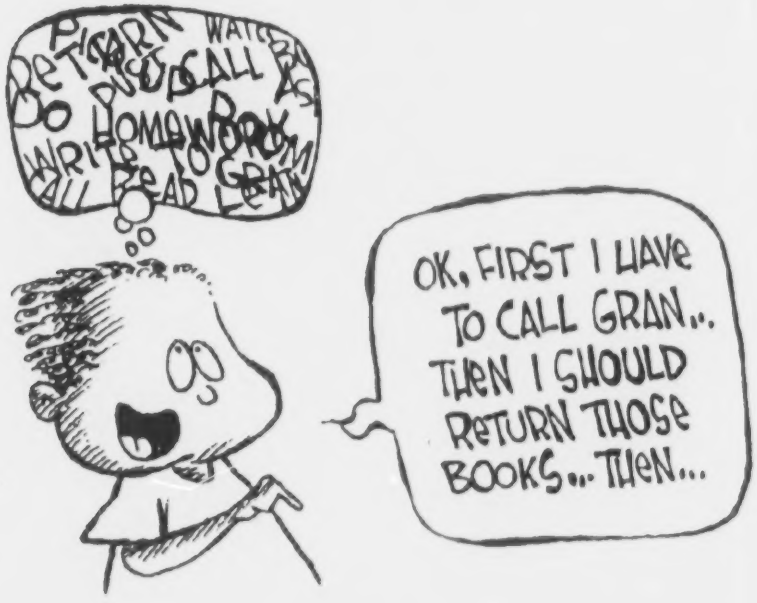
We hope you have had fun with these stories!

Part II
Guidelines for Parents

Speaking and Listening

Speaking is more than just a way of communicating information to others and of asking questions. Likewise, listening is more than just not talking.

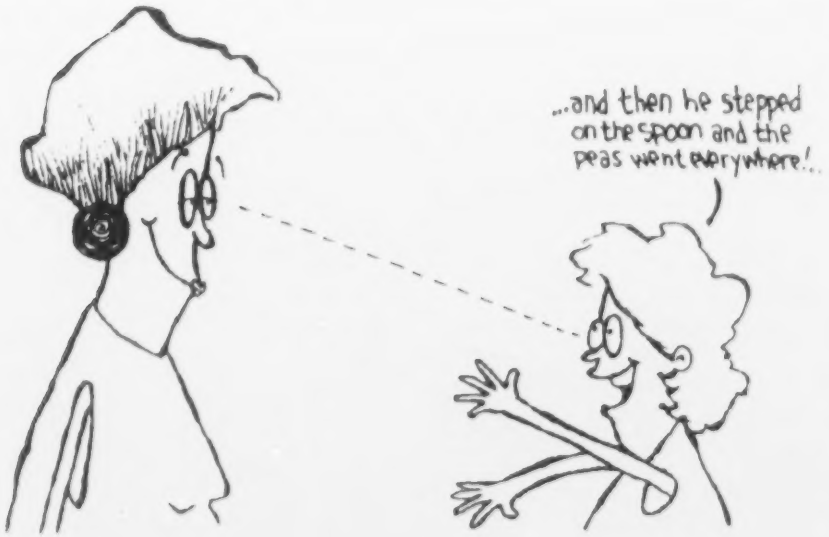
Many of us tend to ignore the fact that speaking also helps us to communicate with ourselves. Talking about our experiences helps us to understand them. Especially in times of stress or confusion, we all "think out loud" in order to organize our thoughts so we can deal with them.



Verbalizing our thoughts and feelings allows us to describe unfamiliar experiences in words we are comfortable with. It allows us to take stock of what we already know and to identify what we need to learn.

Talking serves exactly the same purpose for our children. Talking allows them to organize and further understand experiences they have already had. It gives them a chance to relate new knowledge to ideas they are already familiar with and it engages them to see how their feelings influence their behavior.

As parents, most of us talk more than we listen. Do you really listen when your six-year-old talks to you? Once, when my daughter Marla was twelve years old, she handed me a cartoon as I was reading the newspaper. It was a *Family Circus* cartoon that showed the father reading a newspaper and the little girl looking up at him. The little girl in the cartoon was saying "Daddy, you have to listen to me with your eyes, not just your ears." My daughter giggled and said: "I used to think that very same thing when I was younger."



Listening is not an easy job. It is more than just hearing another person's words. Real listening is an active process which involves paying attention to and trying to understand the message behind what another person is saying. My daughter taught me that eye contact helps make the speaker feel connected with the listener.

How to Listen to Your Child

By learning to communicate effectively we develop a positive self-image. Parents who take time to talk with and really listen to their children are actually improving their children's self-esteem. When a parent does this, she also strengthens her own image of herself as a good parent. Here are six ways you can improve conversation between yourself and your child:

1. **BE INTERESTED.** Invite your child to share her opinions and ideas with you so that she will become comfortable explaining her thoughts to you. Encourage her to identify and name her feelings by putting them into words. Let her know you are paying attention by picking up on and verbally interpreting her body language and then invite her to translate the feelings she expresses with gestures into words. For example, if your child becomes annoyed with you and expresses her frustration by sulking (every parent recognizes the slouchy shoulders, lowered eyebrows, and jutting lip which indicate that his child has resorted to the "full-body pout"), you might say, "You don't seem very happy. It's OK for you to tell me that you're mad at me. We usually feel better after we talk about our feelings."

2. **AVOID DEAD-END QUESTIONS.** Open up conversation rather than cutting it off. Instead of saying "Did you learn anything in school today?" you might open up a conversation by asking, "What stories did you read at school today?" or "Who did you play with at recess?" If you want to start a conversation with your child, avoid questions which require a yes or no or right answer in response.

3. **EXTEND CONVERSATION.** Pick up on some part of your child's conversation and extend it. If your child says, "Michael Jordan is my favorite basketball player," you might ask him: "What does Michael Jordan do that you like seeing?"

When you incorporate your child's own words into your speech, you strengthen his confidence in his own verbal skills and you also let him know that his ideas and opinions are valued.

4. **SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS.** Let your child know what you are thinking about. If you are wondering how to arrange the furniture or trying to decide about a gift for a relative, ask your child questions like, "I'm not sure where to put this chair. Where do you think would be a good place?" or "What do you think Grandma would like for her birthday?" Be sure to take your child's opinions seriously by talking out the practical implications of her suggestions.

5. **DEFINE AND REFLECT FEELINGS.** If you think something is bothering your child, make the best guess you can about what it is. By doing so, you open up two possibilities for conversation. If you have guessed right, then you and your child can discuss ways of coping with the problem. If you have guessed wrong, you have given your child the opportunity to tell you so and to talk about what is really bothering him. For example, you might say, "You seem to be feeling sad today. Did something happen at school?" This soft approach is more likely to get a child to talk about his feelings than directly asking him "What's wrong?"

6. **OBSERVE CUES.** Your child will give you hints that let you know when she's ready to end a conversation. When she starts staring into space or giving really silly responses, it's probably time to stop.

Language Models

We all learn about language by interacting with other people. Children are influenced by and learn to imitate the language used by those around them. Every parent who has heard a Bart Simpson phrase come out of his child's mouth can testify to the fact that children develop their speaking skills by imitating models in their immediate environment.

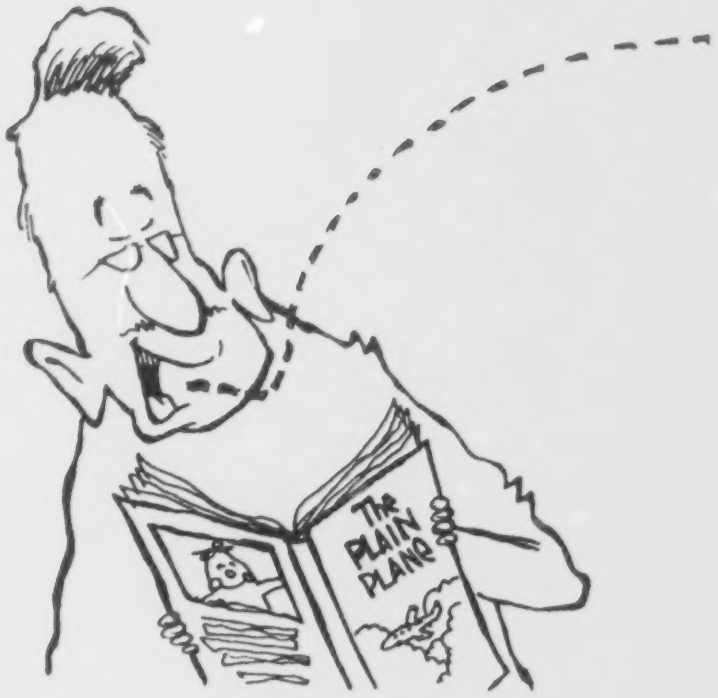
Parents, teachers, and television—all of these models influence a child's attitudes toward the use of language (as one language specialist has said, "Language is more caught than taught"). The way you speak with and listen to your child is the largest and most influential factor in determining how she will learn to communicate with others. A child spends more time and has a deeper involvement with his parents than with any other adult. As parents, we control most of the contact our children have with society.

Modeling good listening and speaking skills for our children means more than just correcting their grammar. In fact, modeling good language use for our children and encouraging them to use language as a tool for understanding their experiences and expressing their feelings is far more effective than correcting speech errors.

Since television also serves as a powerful model of language use for children, it is a good idea to take time to watch and discuss your children's favorite programs with them. Television doesn't provide the interaction that children need from teaching models, but you can provide that interaction by sharing and discussing their TV viewing with them.

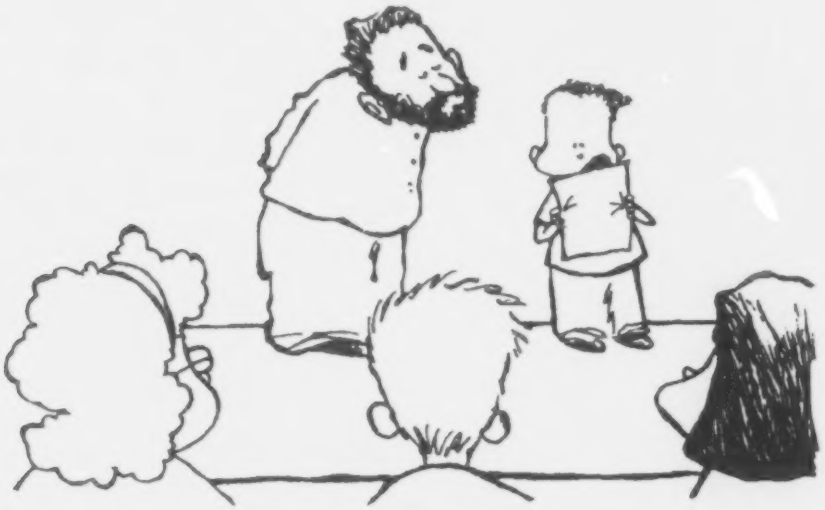
Will Developing Good Speaking and Listening Skills Help My Child at School?

Recent studies show that good listening skills positively affect children's ability to learn to read. Reading is really a thinking process which involves reconstructing meaning from print. Consequently, children with good communication skills are better able to "hear" the words they read. Communication skills usually influence a child's success in reading activities because spoken language serves as the bridge between the new ideas represented in books and things the child already knows.



Regularly reading aloud with our children serves a similar purpose. Because written language is usually different from spoken language, we "bridge the gap" between those two modes of communication for our children by reading to them. Reading aloud also gets our children used to the language patterns of literature, improves their vocabulary, and increases their understanding of the world around them. When a child becomes familiar with books because her parents have read aloud to her, learning to read is more likely to be a pleasurable activity for her.

Right now you are probably saying to yourself, "I can understand how good listening skills can help my child to become a more successful student, but talking in school is only going to get him into trouble." In fact, talking is as important to the process of learning and understanding new concepts as listening is. We all need to participate in and experience knowledge in order to really learn. Likewise, children need regular practice in expressing their own meanings if they are going to develop the ability to really understand what they read and hear. If they do not have the opportunity to speak and write about new knowledge, it is difficult for their reading and listening skills to progress beyond mere word recognition. Learning is an interactive and dynamic process. Children can make new ideas their own by discussing, dramatizing, writing about, or singing about them. This kind of learning encourages children to incorporate new knowledge into their own understanding of the world.



Activities for Fun and Learning

One enjoyable way to improve speaking and listening skills is to practice by playing games. Select one or two of the following to share with your children.

Hear, Here

- Make a tape of sounds you hear regularly in your home, such as popcorn popping, a dog barking, a cat meowing, a baby crying, a faucet dripping, a door opening and closing, a vacuum running, wind chimes clinking, a person yawning, or a family member laughing. Let your children listen to the sound and identify what they hear.

You Name It

- Read aloud the word that appears in bold print. Then read the list of items that follow it and ask your child to select which items are most closely related to the word in bold print. Correct answers are in italics.

COLD

ice, shoe, book, *snow*

GREEN

lips, *grass*, coffee, *lime*

SMALL

fly, *button*, house, truck

ROUND

box, sock, *ball*, *penny*

LOUD

whisper, *thunder*, flower, *drums*

BIG

mouse, *elephant*, *mountain*, peanut

HOT

paper, *sun*, ring, *oven*

Now let your children make up some to ask you.

Nursery Rhymes

- Read a line from a familiar nursery rhyme using an incorrect word, and allow your child to give the correct word. For example:

Jack and Jill went up the hill, to fetch a **sail** of water...(pail)

Mary had a little **ham** whose fleece was white as snow...(lamb)

Hickory, Dickory, Dock, the mouse **skipped** up the clock...(ran)

Peter, Peter Pumpkin-Eater had a **life** and couldn't keep her...(wife)

Three **fine** mice, three **fine** mice, see how they run...(blind)

There was an old woman who **baked** in a shoe...(lived)

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack **walk** over the candlestick...(jump)

Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden **blow**...(grow)

The End of the Rhyme

- Challenge your children to fill in the blank with a word that rhymes with the last word of the first phrase.

1. Behind the log
   was a spotted _____. (frog or dog)
2. I will bake
   a banana _____. (cake)
3. He ran through the house
   when he saw the _____. (mouse)
4. I polished my shoe
   so it looks like _____. (new)
5. If you throw that jar,
   will it go very _____? (far)

6. She was trying to tell
who was ringing the _____. (bell)

7. The big fat cat
ran after the dirty old _____. (rat)
8. While they go for a walk
they will laugh and _____. (talk)
9. Trying to look cool,
he fell into the _____. (pool)

These activities were taken from *Teach Vital Learning Skills: Listening Games for Elementary Grades* by Margaret John Maxwell.

Chalkboard Chatter

Mary Ann Duke, a literacy teacher in Sarasota, Florida, sent us this story about the importance of practicing.

As my mother used to say, "Anything worthwhile takes effort!" It does take effort to be a parent these days. I guess that's one of the facts of life.

Sometimes the word "effort" can be translated into the word "practice." For example, the masterful performance of a great violinist, pianist, football player, or gymnast is a result of PRACTICE. Without practice in the beginning, one may never achieve the level of skill required to be "really good." Without continued practice, sharpened skills will soon begin to erode.

Learning to read requires a similar kind of effort. You can do many things to help your child practice the skill of reading. Moreover, the effort your child exerts in this type of practice can actually be fun!

One of the most important things you can do is read to your child every day. Every piece of research I have ever read on the subject of teaching children to read lists reading aloud as a priority. Teachers should read aloud to their students; parents should read aloud to their children. My own mother (remember the person I quoted at the beginning of this article?) understood that. Even though I am 49 years old, she still wants to read to me when I visit. Usually it is an article from the newspaper, or a magazine, or an excerpt from a book she is currently reading and very excited about. My mother used to read aloud to me in order to help me sharpen my reading skills. Now this experience is a way for us to share our current interests and enthusiasms.

When you read to your children, choose books with their interests in mind. Visit your local library. The shelves abound with wonderful selections, and the children's librarian will be glad to help you.

Get excited about children's magazines and read them together. Read the articles, work the crossword puzzles together, the dot-to-dots, mazes, etc. Take your children to the magazine section of the bookstore to make selections. When you discover your child likes a particular magazine, subscribe to it in your child's name. If a fond grandma, aunt, or uncle is wondering what to give your child as a special birthday or Christmas present, suggest a subscription to his favorite magazine.

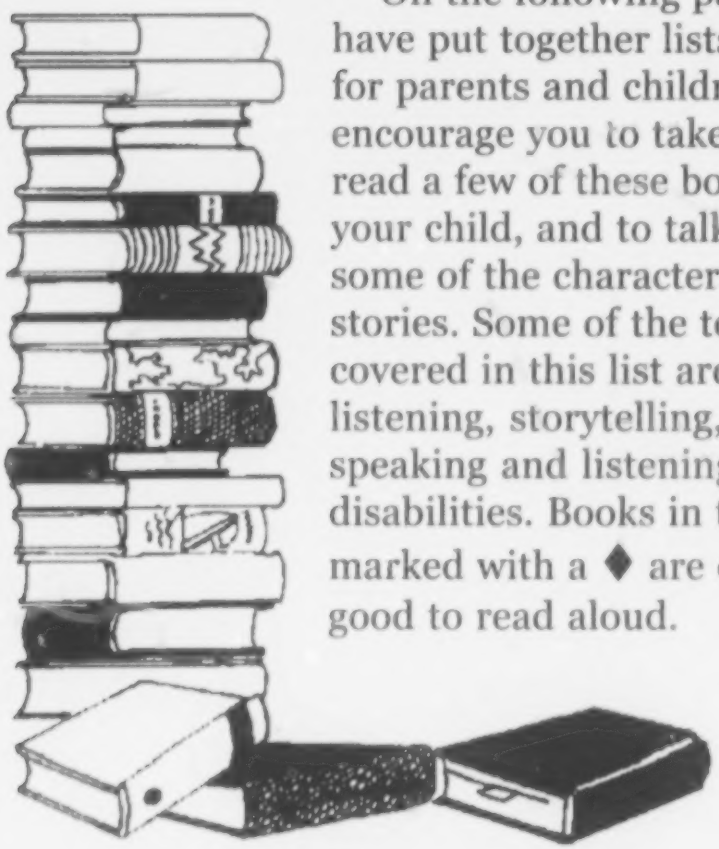
C7

Since seeing yourself on videotape or hearing yourself on an audio cassette tape is a very interesting experience, you might use these tools to improve your child's reading ability. Turn on the tape recorder and let your child read a passage unrehearsed. Play it back, then have your child practice (there's that word again) the passage and

read it again while being taped a second time. Both you and your child will be impressed by the way practice improves her reading of the passage. These activities can all be fun learning experiences...and that is what this column is all about...helping parents have fun with their children while teaching them, training them, and loving them in the process...ENJOY!

C8

Books for Parents and Children



On the following pages we have put together lists of books for parents and children. We encourage you to take time to read a few of these books with your child, and to talk about some of the characters in the stories. Some of the topics covered in this list are speaking, listening, storytelling, and speaking and listening disabilities. Books in the list marked with a ♦ are especially good to read aloud.

Books for Parents

Are You Listening? by Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A Stevens. Explains the physical and physiological aspects of listening. Chapters focus on various places where listening occurs, including family circles, schools, conferences, business meetings, sales situations, and several others. Covers different styles of listening, and provides tips to enhance listening.

That's Not What I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships by Deborah Tanner, Ph.D. Presents ways to identify conversational styles, and discusses how they are different and similar. Looks at conversation in several types of relationships, including friendships, marriages, and the workplace.

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. Suggests ways to avoid turning simple conversations into arguments, to instruct rather than criticize when you correct your child's behavior, and to find effective alternatives to punishment.

The New Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease. Explains why, how, and when to read aloud. Offers guidance concerning what to do and not to do while reading aloud. Recommends books for parents to read aloud with their children. Categories include the following: predictable, wordless, picture, short novels, novels, poetry, and reference.

No Nonsense Parenting Guide: Tough Topics by Sara Wilford. Gives parents ideas on using books to talk to their children about current issues and problems. Includes an annotated list of suggested titles, and ideas for parents and teachers working together. Also covers literacy and learning to read.

*Draw-and-Tell: Reading*Writing*Listening*Speaking*Viewing*Shaping* by Richard Thompson. Contains twelve short stories to share with children. Each of the stories includes instructions for telling the story as well as a built-in visual map which shows you how to illustrate the story as you tell it. If you follow the simple directions for illustrating the story line, you will end up with a picture of one of the characters in the story. The introduction provides ideas and techniques for good storytelling.

Books for Parents and Children to Share

We divide our book selections into three age categories (4–6, 6–8, 8–10). Some children will be able to read several of the books by themselves, but other books might be too difficult. With your children, look through the books at a library, school, or bookstore, and decide which ones they can read. The books that are too difficult remain possible choices since you can read them aloud to your children.

Ages 4-6

More First Words: Playtime by Margaret Miller. Photographs of children and large-type print present different actions which occur during play. Allows a child to associate a word with a specific action.

Who Says That? by Arnold L. Shapiro. Shows over twenty animals and insects, sounds they make, plus several girls and boys and the noises they generate. Text rhymes to make reading more lively and appealing.

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin, Jr. This companion to the well-known *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* focuses on sounds different animals make. While reading, children will enjoy chanting the rhythmic words and making animal noises.

The Listening Walk by Paul Showers. A little girl and her father take a listening walk around town. They do not hurry, and they do not talk. They do keep very still and listen closely to discover all of the different sounds around them. Draws a child's attention to some noises and sounds he might hear if he listens intently.

- *Baby's Boat* by Jeanne Titherington. Serene and gentle pictures illustrate this youngster's voyage in a silver moon boat. Parents can share this lullaby with children before tucking them in bed.
- *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood. This is a cozy tale about a snoring granny, a dozing dog, a slumbering mouse, and several other engaging creatures. Everyone in the group is fast asleep, until a flea wakes up and chaos begins!

Ages 6-8

The Kitten Who Couldn't Purr by Eve Titus. Jonathan the kitten doesn't communicate well because he can't purr. After unsuccessful attempts at barking, mooing, and quacking, he finds another way to convey a message. Uses predictable text and large pictures.

Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman. Grace wants to try out for the part of Peter Pan at school, but her classmates tell her she can't since she is a girl and she is black. With the help of her family, Grace discovers she can be anything she wants to be. Because she has the courage to speak up and try out, Graces gets the part and gives an excellent performance.

Aunt Isabel Tells a Good One by Kate Duke. Aunt Isabel is a remarkable storyteller, and shows young Penelope how to tell a good story by spinning a fanciful tale. Presents storytelling to children as a fun and inventive activity, instead of a task to perform at school for a grade.

Mandy by Barbara D. Booth. Mandy is deaf and she hates the dark because in the darkness, she can't sign or read anyone's lips; it makes her feel so alone. When her grandmother loses a special brooch, Mandy braves a storm at night to find it even though she is frightened. Gives readers a glimpse of what a commonplace incident might be like for a deaf child.

♦ *Sheep in a Shop* by Nancy Shaw. Rhythmic text and amusing illustrations show five sheep on a whimsical shopping adventure. After they select their gift, they discover they do not have enough cash to pay for it. These clever sheep solve their problem and figure out a way to stay cool at the same time.

♦ *Tikki Tikki Tembo* by Arlene Mosel. Presents a humorous fable that explains why Chinese people changed their tradition of giving their firstborn sons long first names, and began giving all their children short names. Children enjoy hearing the repetition of the long name, "Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruchi-pip peri pembo," and saying it themselves.

Ages 8-10

The Vicar of Nibbleswicke by Roald Dahl. Reverend Lee's position is threatened because he has a disability that causes him to turn all of his words around. Luckily, the local doctor knows the cure: "walk backward while speaking." This witty tale was written for the benefit of the Dyslexia Institute.

You Can Speak Up in Class by Sara Gilbert. Addresses feelings of discomfort and anxiety that students have when speaking in the classroom. Presents reasons for these problems and gives practical ways to deal with them.

Help Is on the Way for: Listening Skills by Marilyn Berry. Comic book illustrations and well organized text explain five steps to successful listening. Also provides tips to improve listening habits at school.

Amy: The Story of a Deaf Child by Lou Ann Walker. Photographs and a first-person account reveal how Amy deals with her deafness. Hearing aids and sign language help Amy enjoy life and participate in activities that other children enjoy.

- *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl. When James crawls into an overgrown peach, he joins a variety of giant creatures for a series of fantastic escapades. After several close calls, this extraordinary group lands in New York City, to begin their new lives.

- *More Stories to Solve: Fifteen Folktales from Around the World* told by George Shannon. Each concise story contains a riddle to solve. Children can listen to the story read aloud, then propose a solution.

Magazines

Also ask your librarian for the following magazines:

The Acorn

Cricket

Hidden Pictures

Highlights for Children

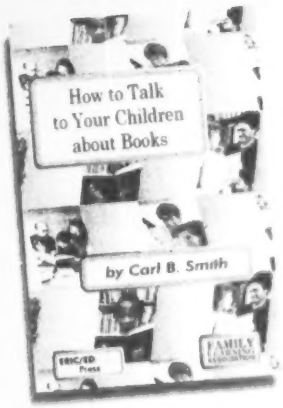
KidSports

Ladybug

MetroKids

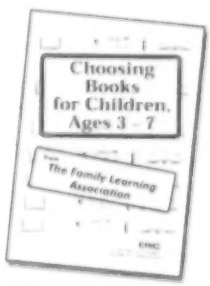
Turtle

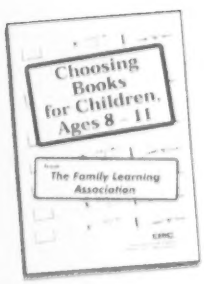
If you found this book useful, please try these other helpful books !



How to Talk to Your Children about Books *by Carl B. Smith*
Start a conversation that will last a lifetime. This book teaches you five easy techniques to prompt book discussions, guidelines for selecting books, how to make it a two-way exchange, plus motivation, values, and making it fun!

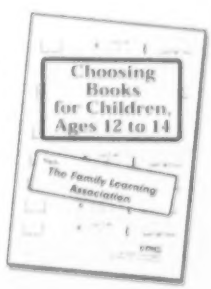
Choosing Books for Children, Ages 3 to 7
Use this resource to appeal to a variety of interests in your kindergarten to primary-age children. Filled with great tips for keeping book conversations going, this book pinpoints a vast array of age-appropriate reading materials.





Choosing Books for Children, Ages 8 to 11
Quick summaries of a huge collection of titles will make it easy to provide good reading for your pre-teens. Top-notch authors, relevant themes, and sensitive issues make this a good companion at the library or bookstore.

Choosing Books for Children, Ages 12 to 14
Let literature open up discussion about some of the difficult issues your teen is experiencing. Includes a special section on communicating about books though writing and journaling.



For information about these and other helpful books
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101, Bloomington, Indiana 47401
1.800.759.4723 www.kidscanlearn.com

Other Resources Available

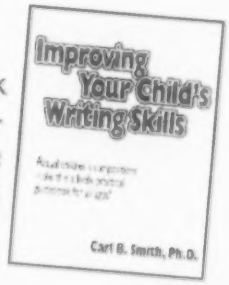
Tutoring Children in Reading and Writing

Book 1: Kindergarten
Book 2: Grades 1-2

These guidebooks use a hands-on approach to helping children improve essential skills. Using easy and effective activities, they focus on the building blocks of reading and writing with sample worksheets that focus on letter recognition, spelling, phonics, and comprehension.

Improving Your Child's Writing Skills

Using actual children's compositions, this fun guidebook takes kids through the entire process of writing, from Pre-Writing and Drafting to Revising and Proofreading. The practical work sheets form a framework to hone the skills of any young writer.



Helping Children to Learn SERIES

Improving Reading and Learning

Phonics and Other Word Skills

Reading to Learn

Creating Life-Long Readers

The Self-Directed Learner

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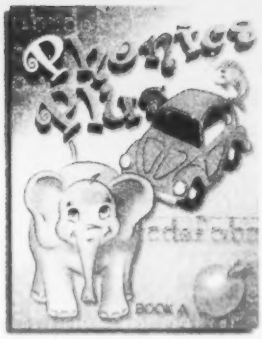
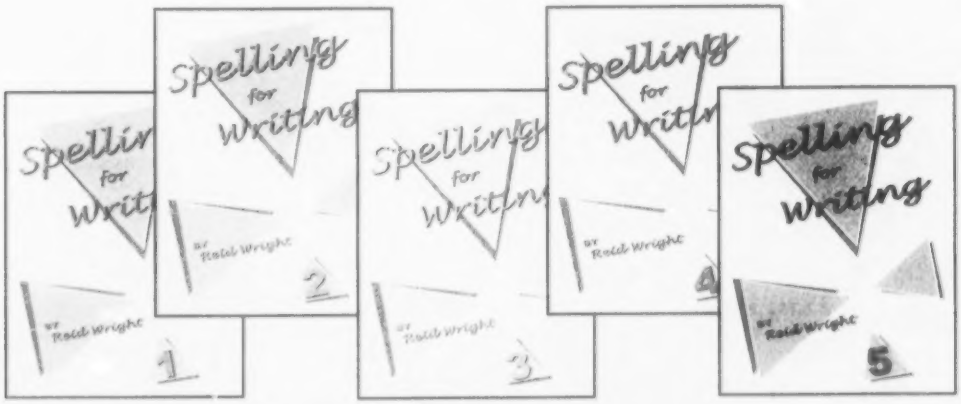


Phonics Plus, Books A, B, and C

developed by The Family Learning Association

These three books help children learn to discriminate sound-symbol correspondences by listening, saying, seeing, and writing letters of the alphabet with illustrated writing and fill in the blank activities. Book A is appropriate for kindergart-ners and first-graders. Book B is for 1st–2nd grade, and Book C is for 2nd–3rd grade.



Spelling for Writing, Books 1 – 5

This series of student workbooks provide all the direction needed to lead kids through the basic spelling patterns of English. By following the weekly lesson plans, you can improve spelling accuracy and the clarity of all written messages. Full of delightful line drawings that illustrate the words being learned, each book is crafted for the age-appropriate level.

For information about these and other helpful books
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Side B: Instructions by Joy Kahn

"Gwendolyn with Her Glasses On"

Narrator:	Brian Sturm

"The Box in the Barn"

Narrator & Mom:	Sonja Rasmussen
Jason:	Brian Sturm
Megan:	Joy Kahn
Dad:	Brian Sturm
Aunt Nancy:	Joy Kahn

"The Grindelstark"

Narrator:	Sonja Rasmussen
Johann:	Brian Sturm
Anne:	Joy Kahn
Old Woman:	Sonja Rasmussen
Visitor & Grindlestark:	Brian Sturm
Wind Singer:	Rick Sakasitz

Studio: Music House, 1101 N. Hartstrait Rd., Bloomington, IN 47401

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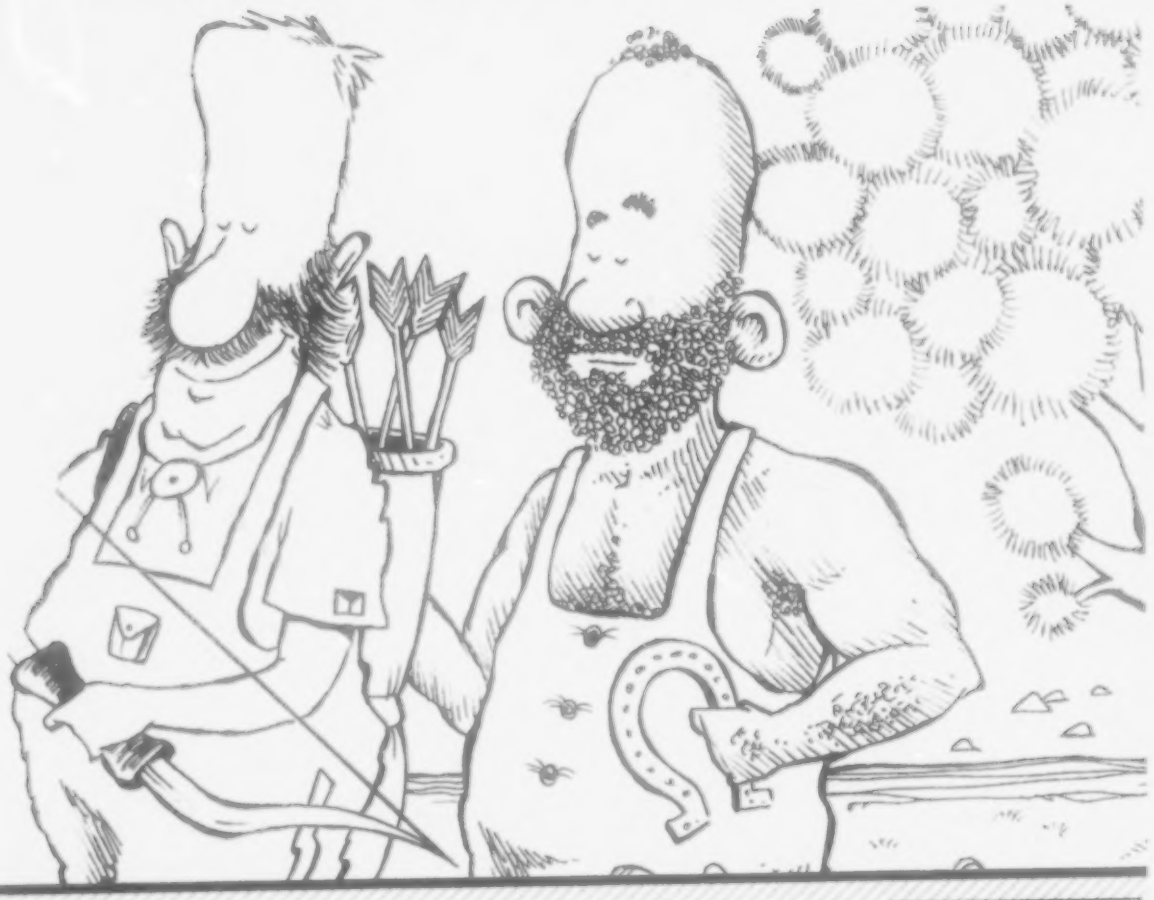

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